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Treasures of Time

Research of the Faculty of Archaeology
of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Location of the main research areas.
Numbering, compare the table of Contents.

Adam Mickiewicz University
Poznań

Treasures of Time

Research of the Faculty of Archaeology
of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

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ISBN 978-83-946591-9-6
DOI: 10.14746/WA.2021.1.978-83-946591-9-6

The Volume is available online at the Adam Mickiewicz University Repository (AMUR):
https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/

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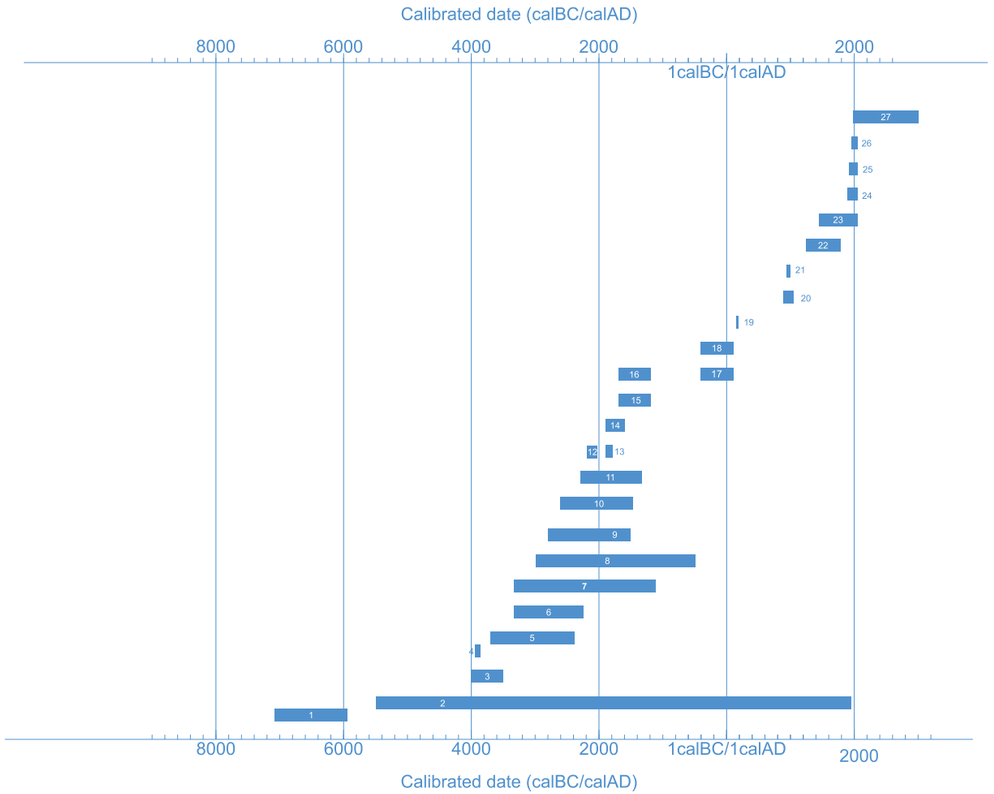
Treasures of Time: Research of the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Introduction

In 2019, archaeology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan celebrated its honourable 100th anniversary! The establishment of archaeology at this university was associated with the strong influence of the authority of Prof. Józef Kostrzewski and a succession of eminent scholars, many of whom we today call Masters.

The year 2019 was a real breakthrough. We started the second century of existence within the Alma Mater Posnaniensis with a new structural independence and quality that the academic archaeology of Poznań had not yet known for its one hundred years of existence. This change, the formation of the first Polish Faculty of Archaeology, has opened new chances and possibilities of which we are now taking advantage.



Calibrated date
(calBC/calAD)

Prof. Józef Kostrzewski
(1885-1969)

Currently, the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University is formed by a number of teams, each with their own leaders. In the majority of cases, these teams are united by interdisciplinarity, which integrates within selected projects the experience of many so-called 'auxiliary' sciences of archaeology. This trend is paralleled by the development of specialised laboratories armed with the latest equipment in the Faculty of Archaeology.

This publication presents the current scientific interests creatively developed by such teams at the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University. The research of these teams covers vast areas in time and space, summing up at least the last 9,000 years of prehistory. The following articles, arranged in chronological order, allow us to explore the prehistory of various areas.

The adventure begins around 7100 BC, in the Neolithic settlement of Çatalhöyük located in Turkey. Then, we move on to the loess uplands near Krakow, where the first farmers from the south of Europe had just arrived (5500 BC). A little later (4000-3500 BC), and a little farther north, in the area of Greater Poland, some of the first megalithic constructions in this part of the world were built. Around the same time, about 800 km to the southeast, a settlement

of the Trypillia culture remains in the phase of development (3950 BC). The end of the Stone Age in Poland was described in the history of Late Neolithic communities on a hill in the center of Kujawy region (3700-2400 BC). Farther east, in the forest-steppe area of Ukraine, significant cultural and social changes resulted in the formation of the Yamnaya culture (3350-2250 BC), beginning the Bronze Age.

Intense elements of this era can be traced in the area of southern Europe in the Greek Anthemous Valley (3350-1150 BC), in Attica (3000-500 BC) on the plains of the Hungarian Lowlands (2600-1450 BC) and to the Upper Dniester Valley, where numerous burial mounds were formed (2800-1500 BC). A similar chronological range is presented in the articles devoted to a unique site in Bruszczewo, Greater Poland (2300-1350 BC), which not only accumulates valuable metal artefacts, but is also the subject of interest of an interdisciplinary team focused on reconstructing its environmental context.

The next text take us far to the east, to the area of Iraqi Kurdistan, where we can appreciate the importance of Mesopotamian influences in shaping the picture of the Early Bronze Age (2200-2150 BC).

Subsequent texts describe the discoveries of Poznań scientists in Syria (1906-1787 BC) and in Greater Poland (1900-1600 BC). These two distant points describe various aspects of life in contemporary communities in the Middle and Early Bronze Age.

The characteristic archaeological materials of the later centuries of the Bronze Age (1800-1200 BC) reveal an intensification of military conflicts and migration processes (1700-1200 BC). The turn of the eras is illustrated in this volume by texts on the interpretation of representations on ancient Greek and Roman sculpture (400 BC-100 AD), as well as the cultural situation in the Polish lands (400 BC-100 AD).

We are introduced to the new era by an article on the funerary customs of communities from the Polish lowlands describing discoveries at the site of Mirosław (160-175 AD). Moments of the formation of elements of Polish statehood are referred to in texts describing towns at Grzybowo (919-1050 AD) and Poznań in the early Middle Ages (950-1000 AD).

Later parts of the Middle Ages are described by sacral monuments located also in the area of the contemporary city of Poznań: the Collegiate Church of St Mary Magdalene (1263-1802 AD) and the still extant Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Ostrów Tumski, founded around 1431 AD in the immediate vicinity of the previously described early medieval site of the ‘origin’ of the city of Poznań.

The final texts of the volume do not refer directly to a particular period of prehistory, but present the history of Polish archaeological research on the Iberian Peninsula, the contemporary perception of prehistoric art by the inhabitants of present-day Canada and Siberia, and the development of methodological thought among Poznań archaeologists.

The volume closes with a text describing one of the many perspectives currently faced by the staff of the Faculty of Archaeology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań: the new ArchaeoMicroLab.

We look to the future with great hope that the Staff of the Faculty will provide ideas for many more volumes of Treasures of Time. We trust that this set of articles will present archaeology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in its new structure as a Faculty and show its potential. We would thus like to encourage you to get acquainted with our Poznań perspective on archaeological studies, and to reflect on ways of exploring the past.

Andrzej Michałowski

Danuta Żurkiewicz

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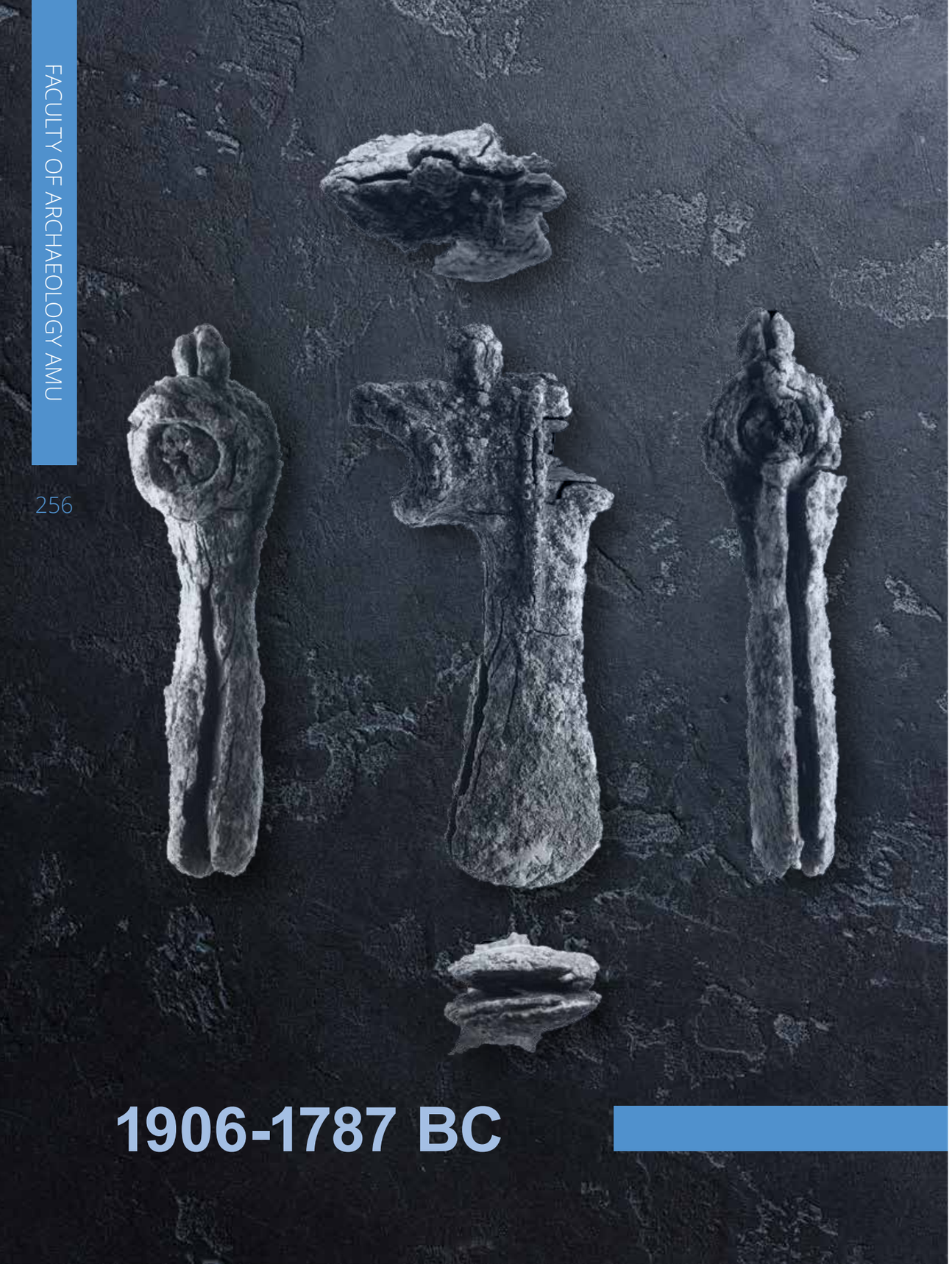

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DOI 10.14746/WA.2021.14.978-83-946591-9-6

From the cradle to the grave

Rafał Koliński, Xenia Kolińska

Abstract

From the cradle to the grave, we are accompanied by the concepts of mortality and immortality. We experience the first as humans but ascribe, unknown to us, the state of eternal being to the gods. In various models of the universe, death may mean the end of everything, a new beginning, or a state of waiting to join the ranks of the Immortals. In Mesopotamia, death means Perduring; souls of the dead were confined to Underworld, where they lasted in darkness, suffering thirst and hunger.

At the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC in Mesopotamia the attitude towards the dead is changing significantly. Cult of ancestors and repeated offerings to dead were meant to improve their condition, and, in turn, secure their support to the living. The GP26 chamber tomb discovered at the Tell Arbid site in northeastern Syria in 2009 by archaeologists of the Institute of Prehistory, Adam Mickiewicz University, is a perfect illustration of these changes. The underground chamber tomb built next to the house became the resting place of three generations of its inhabitants, judging from the fact that at least 15 people were buried there successively. Prestigious grave gifts testify to the wealth of the family, and the finds of sacrificial vessels and animal bones illustrate ceremonies performed during the funeral. The tomb was ritually closed by burying the dog in the shaft leading to its chamber. The tomb was avoided being robbed in antiquity, thanks to which archaeologists from the Adam Mickiewicz University could study it and shed light on the beliefs and splendor of the inhabitants of northern Mesopotamia dating back almost 4,000 years.

Keywords: Mesopotamia, Middle Bronze Age, burial customs, chamber graves

When the gods created mankind, for mankind they established death,
life they kept for themselves[1]

Organization of the Universe

The Mesopotamians believed that the Universe was made up of three different spheres: Heaven, Earth, and the Underworld. Only gods can stay in heaven for it is the zone of immortality. The earth below, which can be haunted by gods and spirits, is inhabited by mortal creatures. However, they are of unequal status as death brings the final end only to animals. Man, containing in himself the divine element eṭemmu, is destined for a different fate. This immortal particle leaves the body after death and seeks refuge in the Underworld, accessible through tombs dug into the ground.

Because of this, the most important duty of the Living towards the Dead in Mesopotamia was burial. Proper burial ensures an *eṭemmu* a safe passage to the Underworld and thus prevents it from turning into a malicious spirit that harms the living. The Underworld is inhabited by the spirits of the Dead and gods assigned to this zone. Intruders may enter here, but have no right to leave. Hence, the Sumerians called the underworld Irkalla, the "land of no return". As Jean Bottéro writes, existing in the Underworld appears as a warped reflection of life on Earth: Death puts an end to everything that is good, clear, cheerful, joyful, motivated, reassuring, and happy in our existence (Bottéro, 1980, p. 43). In the Underworld, an *eṭemmu* still lives and feels needs such as thirst and hunger; but in a dry land full of dust, it is not able to satisfy them on its own (Hockmann, 2010, p. 14). Only the Living, by making sacrifices, can keep it satisfied. In this way, images of existence after death made the Dead an integral part of society whose "coexistence" was regulated by a system of rituals. At the same time, the desecration of a grave, and in particular the bones contained in it, was considered one of the worst crimes that could be committed. Not only was the place where sacrifices were made to the ancestors destroyed, but by annihilating the mortal remains, an *eṭemmu* was condemned to eternal torments.

The above rules underwent modification at the end of the third millennium BC after the arrival of the Semitic tribe of the Amorites in Mesopotamia. They brought with them the worship of ancestors and the belief that the shadows of the dead can intercede with the gods for the living, winning their favour. A new and significant element of these beliefs was the desire to maintain the closest possible bond with deceased members of the family. That is why the Amorites reorganised living space in settlements and households: they decided that it was safest and most convenient to locate the grave inside the house or in the yard. Such a location makes it easier to perform rituals improving the existence of the dead in the Underworld (Jacquet, 2012), allows the protection of a grave from destruction, and maintains the aforementioned bond with the ancestors.

The situation of the dead who did not have a guardian or someone who would take care of their existence in Irkalla was dramatic: they peregrinated in the dark of the Underworld, choking on clay and dust. For those who were not buried, an even worse fate awaited – wandering on Earth and feeding on waste. It was believed that a spectre that wanders the world turns into a malicious demon capable of driving people mad and making them sick. Likewise, a spirit whose worship has been neglected could have disastrous effects on the living. Magical formulas served to ward off evil; judging from their content, rituals were addressed to ghosts, including anonymous ones (KAR 227, col. III 8-24 and 27-50; LKA No. 79, translated by Ebeling, 1931, pp. 131-132). The dead who had numerous offspring were in a better position: more people made sacrifices to them and cared for their existence in the afterlife. Only unborn children enjoyed special favours and could function in the afterlife without the support of a living family.

It was therefore common for the living to designate in advance a *pāqidu* - the person responsible for looking after their soul. This function was usually performed by the eldest surviving son, whose duty it was to perform the *kispûm* ritual to ensure an eṭemmu continued. Pāqidu performed libations by pouring out water (*mê nakû*) and saying the name of the deceased (*šuma zakāru*) (Bayliss, 1973, p. 116). The rite seems simple, but it is known from the texts that, as part of the sacrifice, the deceased was also offered water, bread, flour, oil, wine, hot broth, beer flavoured with roasted grains, and honey as well as sometimes goat, sheep, cow, or turtle (!) (Tsukimoto, 1985, pp. 39-42, 55, 59-62).

We believe that, in a moral sense, *kispûm* was a rite that could be performed independently, combined with a feast or funeral feast, or included in magical rituals. The latter include texts LKA 79 and LKA 80, describing the funeral of a "scapegoat" intended as a substitute for a sick man (Tsukimoto, 1980, pp. 129-135), and texts CT 45, 99 describing a *kispûm* ritual performed *ina şerim* ("in the steppe") during which a figurine representing a demon was buried (Tsukimoto, 1985, pp. 140-145). Upon burial, sacrifices were made of food (flour, dates, bread, beer, etc.) and gifts in the form of a set of articles of everyday life (bowls, leather goods, etc.) and ornaments (earrings, tiaras, arm rings, bracelets) (Tsukimoto, 1980, pp. 129-135).

How often was *kispûm* performed? Various terms appear in the sources: most often the months of *abu* (literally "father, ancestor") or *ajjaru* (Tsukimoto, 1985, p. 84) are associated with offerings for the dead. It is also known that the ritual was performed on the new moon, as in a certain letter the sender requests from his brother garlic, onions and several kinds of fish and asks: *During the whole year on kispûm, during the new moon days in your father's house, what can I give?* (CT 43, 106) (Tsukimoto, 1985, p. 46). It can therefore be assumed that it was during this time that family members gathered for a ritual meal during which sacrifices were made and advice was sought from the deceased ancestors and deities of the Underworld (Bottéro, 1980, p. 38).

GP26 – family tomb

In the eastern part of the site of Tell Arbid excavations uncovered five residential houses inhabited in the period around 1906-1787 cal BC (Figure 1) (Koliński & Goslar, 2019, Table 2) and

[1] Gilgamesh Epos, tablet X, col. III, ll.3-5. George, 2003, p. 278.

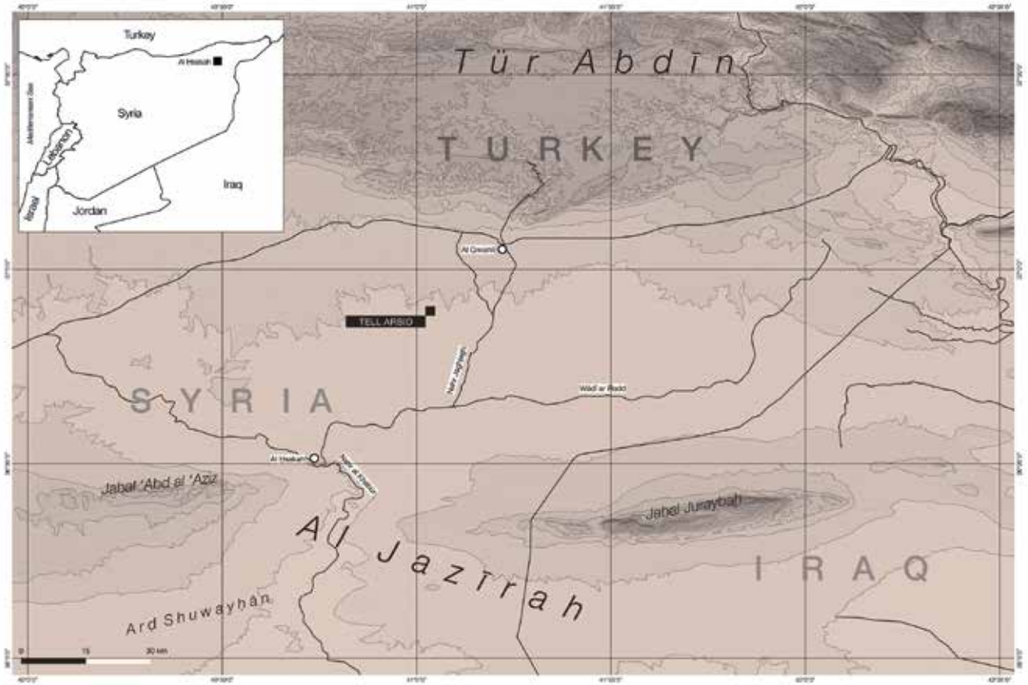

Figure 1. Map of the north-east Syria showing location of Tell Arbid (Map by Joanna Mardas).

related five small cemeteries, which consisted of chamber graves, cist graves, shaft shaft graves, and pit burials. The tomb GP26 stood out: it was the largest, it was ritually closed after the last funeral, and it had avoided being robbed in antiquity.

Tombs of this type, referred to by the Akkadian word *kimaḫḫum* (Jacquet, 2012, p. 125), look impressive after excavation, but we must remember that the chambers were hidden underground and could only be reached through a vertical shaft. Construction began with the excavation of a large cavity oriented on an east-west axis. At its bottom, a burial chamber was built of dried bricks – its construction started with two longer walls over which a barrel vault was erected. Then, one of the shorter sides was closed permanently and the other opening was used as the entrance to the tomb. A shaft was dug to meet this entrance, allowing its use for burials. After each funeral, the entrance was blocked with bricks and the shaft was covered with earth (Figure 3).

A vertical wall was erected above the entrance to the chamber and served several functions (Figure 2). Firstly, it signaled the location of the shaft. Secondly, it prevented earth from falling down in the event that it was necessary to clean the shaft to open the chamber and bury a newly deceased. Finally, because it protruded above the ground, it created a kind of low bench that was a convenient place to sacrifice to the dead. In terms of orientation and

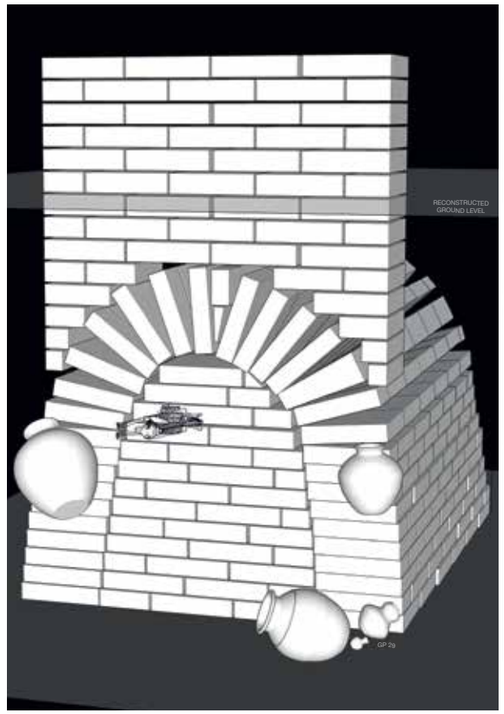

Figure 2. Reconstruction of the tomb and individual phases of the shaft leading to the GP26 chamber (Reconstruction by Maciej K. Morawski).

Figure 3. The facade of GP26 after the tomb has been exposed (Photo: Tomasz Tam).

construction, tomb GP26 is similar to all chamber graves in the settlement, with the façade wall and shaft protruding above the ground also observed in some cist graves.

Bones belonging to at least 15 people were found in grave GP26, and an additional burial was placed in the northern corner of the shaft (GP29). The uncertainty as to the number of dead stems from the fact that bodies previously placed in the grave were moved deeper into the chamber to make room for the next corpses. The body was always placed with its head towards the inside of the chamber, its back to the wall, and in a flexed position. In the case of GP26, human bones were mixed with animal bones (presumably sacrificed at funerals) and grave goods. At the time of discovery this complex formed a layer with a thickness of approx. 30 cm. The last buried person was a woman over 40 years old. Earlier, the bodies of three men (one aged 20-25, two with no age determination) and three more women (one aged 35-40, two with no age determination) were placed in the grave, although the poor state of preservation of the bones makes some of the identifications less than certain. In addition, the remains of seven children (aged 7-14, 5, 4, 3, two under 1, and two newborns) were found in the chamber (cf. G7/37/62 in: Sołtysiak & Koliński, 2012, Table 2). The body placed in the shaft belonged to a child about 9 months old at the time of death (cf. G8/37/62 in: Sołtysiak & Koliński, 2012, Table 2). The total of four adult women and three adult men suggests that people belonging to

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Figure 4. A set of vessels found in the burial chamber
(Photo: Marcin Szabłowski).

two or three generations of the same family and their children were found resting in the tomb. Given that graves of this period were family burials, the total of four adult women and three adult men suggest that people found in GP26 belonged to two, maximum three geneartions of the same family.

In the burial chamber GP26, 428 items were found, including 23 metal products, 9 ceramic vessels (Figure 4), one vessel of stone, and 405 beads of various materials (Kolińska, 2017a). Only five of the listed items are related to the last burial: a pin of bronze with a flat head possibly originally fastening a robe across the chest, three beads of carnelian and jade, and a small bronze plate probably placed on the tip of on one of the fingers. Three large storage vessels were placed in the tomb shaft.

The grave – a link in the family bond

The discovery of a group of houses and related cemeteries at the Tell Arbid site, illustrates the change in social ties that resulted from forging new relationships between the living and ancestors as well as the consequences of this phenomenon. For the needs of the community of the Living and the Dead, not only the organisation of the settlement space was changed, but a new type of sepulchral architecture was invented: chamber tombs enabling repeated burial in the same location as death took individual family members (Koliński, 2017). This tomb united the remains of family members in a physical sense, while in a spiritual sense it was the seat of collectively understood ancestors. At the same time, it performed a sacred function; here rites were performed and sacrifices were made supporting ancestral spirits in the Underworld. We know that in the Old Babylonian period, the direct recipient of the *kispûm* was most often the father of the person performing the ritual, whose name was mentioned during the ritual – but the cult secured the existence of all deceased relatives as well, including those whose presence in the memory of the living had faded over time (Tsukimoto, 1985, pp. 163-183).

The *kispûm* ritual served to provide both the livelihood of the ancestral spirits and their favour towards the living. However, ritual activity in and around the tomb was not limited to *kispûm*. The tomb was also the setting in which the climax of the funeral took place. Finally, when it stopped being used, it could either be ritually closed or the remains of the burials could be removed from the chamber and taken to the family's new home where they were re-interred.

Rituals of passage

The body of the deceased, posed a kind of threat to the living – it could spread impurity. Because of this, it was of utmost importance that the dead quickly received a proper burial and the whole place could be cleansed. Thus, the funeral usually took place the day after death and the bodies were rapidly made ready for it (Jaquet, 2012, p. 124): they were washed, eyelids were painted, the and the face was covered with cloth, as Gilgamesh did to his friend Enkidu (George, 2003, p. 655). The deceased was then dressed in new or clean robes and adornments were put on. Such attire distinguished people going to the Underworld from the living who wore rags during mourning, as reflected in the epic of Gilgamesh: when Enkidu decided to come to the Land without Return, Gilgamesh advised him to put on old attire riddled with holes to prevent him from being recognised as a newly arrived deceased, and thus make it possible to return to earth (which Enkidu did not do and had to stay in the Underworld) (Scurlock, 1995, p. 1885).

The funeral, referred to by the Akkadian word *ḫidirtum* (Jacquet, 2012, p. 128), was the occasion for the family to make their final farewell to the deceased and took place during a feast that could last up to two days. During it, the deceased was seated on a chair while the living imbibed beer, ate bread and meat, and hired mourners expressed the pain of the loss (Veenhof, 2008, p. 112). After the feast, the corpses were placed in a grave prepared for their reception: the shaft dug out, the entrance unblocked, and the remains of the previous decesased moved further into the chamber. The body was placed on its side and weapons or prestige items were placed next to it as well as food for the road (usually a lamb's leg) and vessels filled with liquids. The funeral rite was performed by a priest whose task it was to prevent the impurity that was understood as manifestly part of the deceased from spreading to people and objects. After the funeral, everyone and everything that remained outside the grave had to undergo a ritual of purification. Mourning for the deceased lasted from 7 to 15 days (Scurlock, 1995, p. 1885).

Objects found in the tomb, in a way witnesses of past events, can be divided into two categories: the personal goods of the deceased accompanying them on their way to the Underworld and permanent elements of the tomb which could be filled with universally necessary funerary substances on the occasion of the next burial. The first category is related to the rite of passage and is intended to distinguish the newly arrived deceased and facilitate their entrance into Irkalla. The second is connected to ensuring them a prosperous existence after death.

The gifts associated with the deceased and accompanying them during the rite of passage of death, include weapons, ornaments, and other prestige items. The weapon is represented in GP26 by a shaft-hole axe and three bronze daggers. Interestingly, in the hole for the axe-handle, there are remains of wood, still awaiting identification. The shaft-hole axe has a very characteristic shape, with a slightly widened cutting edge and an ellipsoidal knob on the butt (Figure 5). Surprisingly close analogies come from Ashur during the Third Dynasty of Ur (the last century of the third millennium BC): one from the so-called "Kupferfund", a treasure of metal products deposited in a vessel hidden in the temple of the god Ashur (VA 5013, Haller & Andrae, 1955, p. 12, Taf. 27a), and another found in the Erdgrab 2305 in the area of Ashur's ziggurat (Andrae, 1922, p. Taf. 60, 1938, p. 80, Taf. 38c; Hockmann, 2010, pp. 94-95, Taf. 20-21). Despite the difference in scale, the similarity is so great that we argue that the specimen from Tell Arbid was made in the same period and was inherited in the family or was acquired as a prestigious "antiquity", a sign of the high social status of its owner. The daggers from GP26 are relatively short and represent types common in northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria in the late third and early second millennium BC: two examples of type 35 and one type 10 or 11 according to Philip's classification (1989). In light of the fact that three adult men are buried in the grave, it is tempting to assume that each of them was laid to rest together with his dagger. The group of prestige items may also include two artefacts, of which only bronze fittings in the form of a metal foot attached to a shaft with rivets remain. The small diameter of the fittings

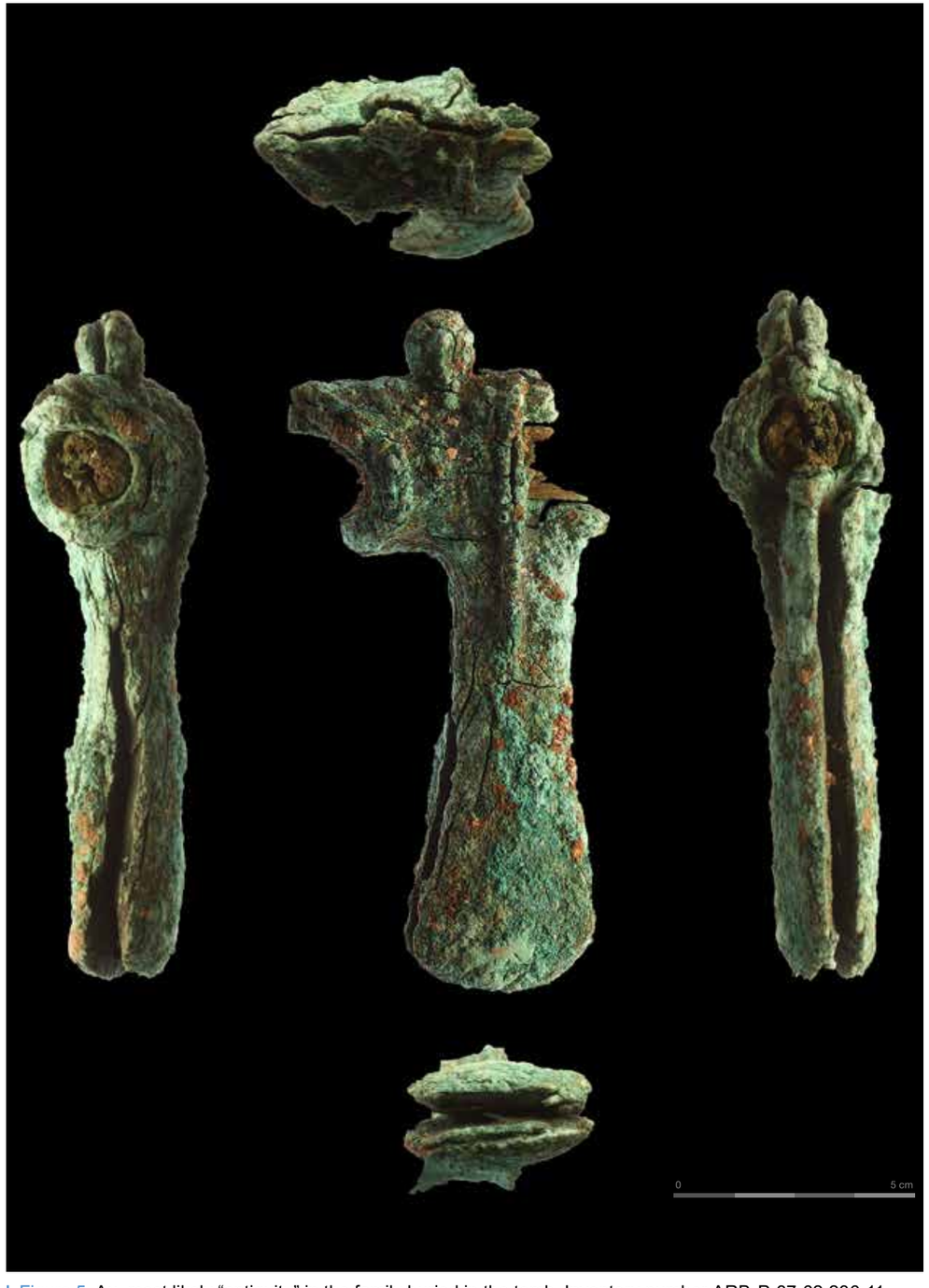

Figure 5. Ax, most likely “antiquity” in the family buried in the tomb. Inventory number ARB-P-37-62-236-11 (Photos by Marcin Szabłowski, plate by Xenia Kolińska).

(2-3 cm) suggests that they belonged to walking sticks or short rods, which may also be a sign of social status. We do not know such finds from other graves in the region, which makes interpretation difficult. Bronze tweezers can also be included in the category of prestige items.

The subcategory of ornaments is richer and more varied. It includes various bronze products: in addition to the already mentioned bronze pin found with the final burial of an adult women, two pins, one with a flat head, the other with a hemispherical head were found; as well as a bracelet; and a small plate with a hole, probably for sewing on a garment. Beads constitute the largest group of ornaments. Some are made of semi-precious stones: 45 are carnelian (Figure 6), 19 are agate, 3 are lapis lazuli, 6 are rock crystal, and 3 are jasper. The rest were made of shell (245) and frit (76). In 6 cases the material could not be determined. A separate group consists of 6 complete beads from the shell of nassarius gibbosulus, living in the Mediterranean Sea (Kurzawska, unpublished data). In the category of ornaments we also included a flat disc of alabaster with a hole 4 mm in diameter, too small to be placed on a shaft like a club. Instead, it was probably part of a necklace or had been sewn onto fabric or leather.

The second category of items placed in the grave, which includes vessels, was related to the satisfaction of *eṭemmu’s* needs after the rite of passage of death. This purpose was served not by the vessels themselves, but rather by the dishes or products that were deposited within them, usually beer, barley, dates, or yogurt/milk (Scurlock, 1995, p. 1884). On the other hand, meat, in the form of a leg or a quarter of an animal, was placed next to the deceased.

The analysis of the contents of the graves at Tell Arbid showed that the chamber of each chamber grave, regardless of the size and number of burials, was nevertheless equipped with the standard so-called drinking set. This set consists of two jugs of different sizes placed against the wall of the chamber in front of the deceased. In the case of the GP26, the chamber of which was opened many times, it was decided to replace the original set with a newer one, also consisting of two vessels; the older set, with due respect, was placed against the blind wall of the chamber. The other vessels found in the chamber include a small narrow-necked jug, the type very often found in children’s graves - hence the name “milking jug”, three shallow small bowls, and a half-preserved pot. It can be assumed that these were gifts allotted to single individuals. The number of these vessels is smaller than the number of adults who were interred, making it difficult to say which principle was followed in this case.

In the tomb of the infant buried in the shaft (GP29) we found gifts related to the existence of the child in the Underworld: a jug, a small “milking jug”, and a set of gifts related to the rite of passage: a bracelet of bright metal (silver, lead?) and a set of 17 beads, including 9 made of *engina mendicaria* shell, a snail probably from the Persian Gulf (Kurzawska, unpublished data; Kolińska, 2017b).

The two storage vessels found in the shaft had also served as containers for gifts deposited after the funeral. They were placed one on the left and one on the right side of the entranceto the chamber.

Undoubtedly, the tomb and the shaft leading to it were a special place. All activities in this area were planned and well-thought-out. It is possible to distinguish six phases of successive use of the shaft. In the first phase after the construction of the tomb, the shaft was probably empty.

Figure 6. A group of carnelian beads (Photo: Marcin Szabłowski).

This contradicts the assumptions of the reconstruction of burial customs, and at the same time a certain regularity emerges: all chamber graves with excavated male burials have vessels in the shafts. The graves where women were buried never. The question arises whether the first person buried in GP26 was a woman. In the second phase, a deceased child was deposited in the northern part of the shaft (GP29). It is unclear why it was not placed in the chamber. Perhaps its death took place shortly after the previous funeral, and therefore it was decided not to open the tomb. In the third phase, related to one of the following burials, two large jugs were placed on the sides of the entrance to hold food/drink for the deceased. In the fourth phase, during the next funeral, the vessel on the right of the entrance, destroyed during the opening of the shaft, was replaced. In the fifth phase, the last deceased was buried, the remains of whom were found in anatomical order at the entrance to the chamber. The last act related to GP26 was the ritual closure of the grave. It consisted of sacrificing a dog and burying it in the upper part of the shaft, just above the top of the chamber entrance. This discovery gives a unique insight into the proceedings of the event of the final closure of a tomb: it is ritually sealed and given a magical guardian. The presence of a complete dog skeleton in a chamber grave is rare. We know of only two such cases: one from Tell Arbid (Piątkowska-Małecka & Wygnańska, 2006) and the other from Tell Barri (Pecorella, 1999). However, neither of the mentioned cases involved closure of the entrance to the grave and neither do we know any rite relating to this practice. The discovery at Tell Arbid is therefore evidence of a previously unknown practice.

Summary

Is the chamber grave GP26 a phenomenal discovery or a sad entry in the archaeological register? Here we argue it is the first, as the results of the AMU mission shed new light on the concept of “family” understood as the There and Here community by showing how tangible ties between the Living and the Dead were built. Most importantly, they allowed verification and reconstruction of some of the burial rituals known from the literature as well as revealed new elements. Undoubtedly, GP26 is a place where one can see how personal attachment turns into a duty to serve loved ones, in the hope that when we leave someone will take care of us, regardless of wherever we are and in the face of the unknown that comes from Death.

Acknowledgments

The research of the AMU mission at Tell Arbid was conducted as part of the research project No. N109 3983 33 “Collapse, decline or development? Settlement and cultural change in Syrian Jazireh at the turn of the Early Bronze Age”, with the support of Polkomtel S.A., Caira Ltd, the University of Poznań Foundation and the Kazimierz Michałowski Foundation in Warsaw. I would like to express my gratitude to prof. Piotr Bieliński from the University of Warsaw, head of the Polish-Syrian Archaeological Mission to Tell Arbid, for consenting to the implementation of the above-mentioned project under his excavation concession. Separate thanks are due to the Syrian authorities: the Director of the Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées, dr. Bassam Jammous, Director of Excavations, dr. Michel al-Maqdissi, Director of the Hassake Region, dr. Abdel-Messih Baghdo, and Mr. Jowan Kassim, Director of the Syrian side of the mission. The above article uses the results of the analytical work of prof. Arkadiusz Sołtysiak, dr. Joanna Piątkowska-Małecka (both UW), prof. Tomasz Goslar (AMU) and dr. Aldona Kurzawska (IAE PAN, Poznań branch); I would like to thank all of them for their fruitful cooperation. My gratitude is due to those who participated in the field research in the 2009 season: Xenia Kolińska, Michał Krueger, dr. Łukasz Rutkowski (UW), Aleksandra Buchalik, Elżbieta Jezierska, photographers: Marcin Szabłowski, Tomasz Tam, students of archaeology at the Adam Mickiewicz University: Iwona Barczyńska, Joanna Mardas, Agata Smilgin, Marika Święszkowska, Michał Lawer and Adam Szczęsny, and Syrian colleagues: Jowan Kassim, Sa’ud Hussain, and Fahad Hussein. I would also like to mention our Late friend Haled Maṭrut; without you, Syria would be a different, worse place.

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ISBN 978-83-946591-9-6